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## St. Elsewhere actor helps launch eco literacy training

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Hollywood actor Ed Begley, Jr. brought his star power to Manteca Thursday to help promote environmental literacy.

An environmental activist for more than three decades, Dr. Victor Ehrlich of the long-running hit television series "St. Elsewhere" gave the opening talk at the environmental literacy training for Manteca Unified School teachers at the American Modular Systems in Manteca. The event was held aptly in the Gen7 Green Learning Center, a demonstration green classroom on display in the parking lot of the Manteca-based company which manufactures these green and "smart" portables.

Begley, who also appeared in a number of hit movies including "Batman Forever,"

started his 10-minute talk by recognizing the significant role that today's educators play in the success of the green revolution not just in this country but throughout the world.

"You, teachers, are the real stars today," he told the nearly two-dozen teachers who attended the training event.

He recalled that he learned his first environmental lessons from his dad, the Academy Award-winning Ed Begley, Sr., not by words but by actions: "Turn off the light. Turn off the water. Love nature.

"Dad didn't use words to teach. He taught by example. My dad was right. This environmental thing is good," he said.



Hollywood actor and environmental activist Ed Begley, Jr., left, and Manteca Unified Superintendent Jason Messer, right, are shown inside the Gen7 "green" classroom built by

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And long before he purchased his 55 mpg eco-friendly Prius, he was already practicing being green by riding his bicycle in his "paper route" as a young boy.

Eco-friendly everyday practices such as composting and recycling materials are not just "good for the environment," they are also "good for (the) pocketbook," Begley added.

"I could retire right now, not because I have a huge amount of money like my good friend, the governor (Schwarzenegger); it's because I don't need much money," by applying sound environmental practices in his day-to-day life, he said.

Begley also praised the partnership that has been forged between Pacific Gas & Electric Company and the Environmental Protection Agency and others "in their wisdom to help build buildings like this," he said, referring to the Gen7 smart and green portable classroom at American Modular.

"It's really the way to go," he said of the building whose walls don't need painting, whose insulation materials are from denim clothing, and electricity costs are significantly cut down thanks to such smart features as sensors that sense when to dim the lights when there are no people in the room.

School district officials who attended the training session included Manteca Unified School Superintendent Jason Messer who introduced Begley, Barry Scott who is the energy coordinator of Curriculum and Instructional Technology at the San Joaquin County Office of Education, and Manteca Unified's Energy Education Specialist Victoria Brunn who said all but two campuses in the school district were represented at the training two-hour training session.

Others who were present were Terry Gray of the California Environmental protection Agency and other representatives of PG&E.




Noting how environmentally friendly is the Gen7 green portable classrooms, Messer said the district unfortunately cannot afford at this time to have these available for MUSD students due to budget constraints.

"It is absolutely ridiculous how underfunded our schools are," he commented.

The superintendent recognized American Modular System's earnest partnership in the school district's environmental stewardship program by pointing out that when a group of sixth graders had a field trip in October at the Spreckels Avenue Gen7 green learning center which included a hard-hat tour of the manufacturing facility, the company stopped their work activity to accommodate the young learners.

"I've never seen a company step up that big," said a highly impressed Messer.

The purpose of Thursday's event is to train teachers in the implementation of the new Education and Environmental Initiative curriculum. Manteca was the first district in California to implement this curriculum which is being launched this month. EEI will be initially implemented in the second - through sixth-grade classes and in the freshmen's earth science.

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